

The Galveston Bay Plan

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What is *The Galveston Bay Plan*?

The Galveston Bay National Estuary Program was established under Section 320 of the Water Quality Act of 1987. The primary purpose of the GBNEP was to develop a *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* for Galveston Bay (*The Galveston Bay Plan*, or the Plan) in order to preserve, protect and enhance this valuable ecosystem of national significance.

This was accomplished from 1990-1995 by a partnership of state and federal agencies, local governments, stakeholders, users and other interest groups in the bay area with input from the general public.

The Plan has 82 management initiatives that address 17 specific problem areas. In broadest terms the Plan addresses these issues in a priority manner:

- Habitat loss and its effect on fish and wildlife;
- Competing human uses of the Bay: a balance between needs and available resources; and,
- Water and sediment quality.

More specifically, the 82 action items in the Plan are divided into 11 categories: habitat protection; species population protection; public health protection; freshwater inflow and bay circulation; spills and dumping; shoreline management; water and sediment quality; nonpoint sources of pollution; point sources of pollution; research; and, public participation and education. The Plan also addresses the Regional Monitoring Program, the role of the public, and implementation and funding.

Who will implement the Plan?

Implementation is administered by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission's (TNRCC's) Galveston Bay Estuary Program office. ("National" was omitted from the name of the program when implementation began and funding shifted from primarily federal to primarily state monies). It relies upon the work of the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, as advised by the Galveston Bay Council, to see that the initiatives are implemented by its many partners. The Galveston Bay Estuary Program is responsible for coordinating agency activities, facilitating public-private partnerships, monitoring the implementation of the Plan, and conducting public outreach and education.

For each of the 82 action items, a lead implementing entity and other participating entities are named. Most action items are to be implemented by the TNRCC or some other state agency; some by federal agencies; some by local governmental organizations; and, some by non-governmental organizations.

What is in the Plan?

Each action item details the following:

- What needs to be done;
- How it should be done (step by step);
- When it will be done (anticipated start of new activity as well as the time-line on existing activities);
- Where it will be done;
- Who will be doing it;
- Estimate of public costs of new actions (5 year period);
- Expenditures by the agency's independent activities pertaining to this action item;
- Potential sources of implementation funding; and,
- Regulatory issues that might result from the activity.

What is the Role of the Galveston Bay Council?

The Galveston Bay Plan proposed creation of a Galveston Bay Council to advise the TNRCC, through the Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP), on all aspects of implementation. The Galveston Bay Council consists of representatives of federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, the research community, local governments, citizens, and other Galveston Bay stakeholders. The Galveston Bay Council is a continuation of the partnerships successfully utilized by the Galveston Bay National Estuary Program for the creation of the Plan.

The Council performs the following functions:

- Provides a forum for technical and stakeholder group review and input during *Galveston Bay Plan* implementation.
- Advises the Commission staff during preparation of progress reports, evaluations, and plan updates.
- Authorizes and makes appointments to subcommittees as necessary.
- Assesses the success of action plans and initiates revisions.
- Addresses legislative issues and makes recommendations to the Texas Legislature.
- Advises the Commission as to annual priorities for implementation of action plans.
- Monitors the effectiveness of actions taken pursuant to the *Plan*.
- Reviews all federal financial assistance programs and federal development projects in accordance with Section 320 of the Clean Water Act.

Section 320 of the Clean Water Act gives the Galveston Bay Estuary Program authority to review federal assistance programs and federal development projects for consistency with the Plan.

How was the Plan developed?

The process used to develop the Plan over a five year period of time was almost as important as the product. The keys to success can be attributed to the following:

- Consensus was used for nearly all decision making, which was a long, hard, but powerful process;
- Cooperative nature of the individuals who participated in the process, representing various agencies, organizations, and interest groups;
- Sound scientific basis of the characterization of the Bay (including status and trends) which factually defined the problems;
- Creation of the Galveston Bay Council to provide ongoing regional input, to advise during implementation of the plan and to recommend adjustments to the Plan, if necessary.

Overall, it is felt that *The Galveston Bay Plan* is a road map for management of Galveston Bay for the future, so that this valuable resource is preserved, protected, and enhanced for the maximum benefit by all its stakeholders.

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